(b) During the period 8th July, 1999 to 31st March, 2000, an amount of Rs. 25.33 crore of excise duty has been refunded to the units manufacturing cigarettes, paan masala and tobacco in the North-Eastern States.

(c) The units which have come up so far, availing of the benefit of the full excise exemption granted to industries in the North-East are engaged in manufacturing activities within the meaning of the Central Excise Act and no irregularity has been noticed.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

(e) Exemption from excise duty has been provided to all goods manufactured and cleared by new industrial units in specified growth centres, Industrial Infrastructure Development Centres, Export Promotion Parks etc. in the State of Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. A similar exemption is available in respect of specified goods manufactured and cleared by new industrial units located in any of the North-Eastern States. These exemptions are expected to accelerate the industrial development of these areas.

Assistance to UCO, Indian Bank and United Bank

†4632. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that United Commercial Bank, Indian Bank and United Bank are running in heavy loss;

(b) if so, the details thereof, bank-wise;

(c) whether Government are contemplating to provide Rs. 5500 crores to salvage these banks;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) whether Government are of the view that disinvestment is a way out to do away with these losses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) Information on the profit and loss of UCO Bank, United Bank of India and Indian , Bank for the year ending 31.3.99 (latest available) is as under:

(Rs. in crores)

	Operating profit	Net profit
UCO Bank	38.38	(-) 67.77 (loss)
United Bank of India	46.40	14.70
Indian Bank	(-) 163.24	(-) 778.50

(c) and (d) Recapitalisation of the weak banks is contingent upon the concerned banks drawing up a viable restructuring programme acceptable to the Government as the owner and the RBI as the regulator.

(e) No, Sir.

Request for Conversion of Short Term into Medium/Long Term Loans

4633. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether bankers of Bellary district of Karnataka have requested the NABARD to give clearance for converting the loans from short term to medium term or long term relating to chilli farmers whose crops were destroyed; and

(b) if so, the steps, if any, taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has reported that it has not received any such request.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.